



ENGLISH COASTAL CHALLENGE SUMMIT REPORT

24TH APRIL 2018

EUROPE HOUSE, SMITH SQUARE, LONDON

This report provides a summary from the workshop sessions of the English Coastal Challenge Summit 2018 and recommendations for future working.



Photo Credit: CPN

English Coastal Challenge Summit Report 2018

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English Coastal Challenge Summit Report 2018

Summit Objective: *To facilitate cross-sector, multi-regional debate in order to explore opportunities for collaboration, address parallelism and duplication, and start the process of developing 21st century policies and actions for our coastal communities, industries and assets.*

On the 24th April 2018, three established coastal networks, the Coastal Partnerships Network (CPN), the Coastal Communities Alliance (CCA) and the Local Government Authority Coastal Special Interest Group (LGA Coastal SIG) met at Europe House, Smith Square in London to explore common ground on coastal issues and joint opportunities for advancing the environmental, economic and social sustainability of



Therese Coffey MP, speaking at the Coastal Challenge Summit. Photo Credit: CPN

our coastal communities. Attendance was cross-sectoral and multi-regional, with 70 delegates present. These consisted of representatives from Coastal Partnerships, Coastal Community Teams, Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Authorities, alongside other coastal stakeholders. This was the first English Coastal Challenge Summit hosted by the CPN, in association with the CCA and LGA Coastal SIG. Bringing together the experience, influence, enterprise and ambition of these varied coastal groups, the Summit provided an opportunity to begin new conversation surrounding innovative and collaborative ways of future working.



Delegates engaging in the workshop sessions at the Summit. Photo Credit: CPN

Opening Session: Setting the Challenge. Chair: Graeme Smith, Teignbridge District Council

The event began with our two keynote speakers and a showcasing of the coastal networks involved. We were extremely pleased to have Therese Coffey MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Conservative MP for Suffolk Coastal, and Wayne Hemmingway MBE, founder of socially sustainable design company Hemmingway Design,

addressing the attendees. As the only MP with 'coastal' in her title, Therese Coffey MP highlighted that, as an island nation, a significant proportion of the English population lives in coastal areas and is impacted by the ensuing issues of resilience and sustainability. With the impacts of climate change, problems such as flooding are only set to become more acute and affect an increasing proportion of the population. She spoke of positivity in the face of difficulty, and of the fact that through shared challenges, opportunities arise.

Wayne Hemingway MBE then spoke to the group regarding effective and sustainable design for the coast. He introduced the delegates to a number of cultural regeneration projects around the English coast, citing the importance of regaining and promoting the unique selling point (USP) that each coastal area possesses. Highlighting the necessity to be brave when approving and delivering projects on our coasts, he championed the re-prioritisation of culture, and its inclusion into coastal development and management.

Representatives from the three organising coastal networks - Amy Pryor, Chair of the Coastal Partnerships Network, Nicola Radford of the Coastal Communities Alliance and Bill Parker of the LGA Coastal SIG – then gave a brief showcasing of their networks and the work they do to support and encourage integrated and collaborative approaches to the coast. Following these organisational introductions, Chris Burgh, the Economic Growth Group Manager at Southend Borough Council, spoke on behalf of the South-East Local Enterprise Partnership about the engagement of coastal councils with LEPs.



Delegates listening intently to the presentations given on the day. Photo Credit: CPN

For the remainder of the day, the event operated in an interactive 'challenge' style. In the first session, entitled *Common Themes*, delegates contributed to debates revolving around the following four key themes:

- Opportunities and Impact – Collaborative Project Potential
- The Empty Space – Coastal Policy for the 2020s
- Forward Together – Common Strategic Issues
- Wide Blue Yonder – What Can Our Joint Vision be?

A feedback session, during which each group voiced their top points for each topic, enabled an insight into the individual discussions and enabled the extraction of key priorities, which were then used to form the basis of discussion in the afternoon.

In the second session, entitled *Familiar Territories*, groups were reorganised in order to allow productive discussion in regional groupings. Regional representatives discussed USPs for their area, funding, engaging MPs and a shared regional vision under the following topic questions:

- As a region, how can we work together on funding?
- How can we reach MPs and encourage collaboration?
- If we were to define a USP for the area, what would it look like?
- How could we employ this USP and still retain a focus upon locality?

Each session was followed by a plenary to share key priorities.

The following is a breakdown of the two sessions in greater detail, outlining the actions that arose as priorities going forward.

Session 1: Interactive Session on Common Themes. **Chair: Nicola Radford, Coastal Communities Alliance**

Groups consisted of representatives from a mix of regions in order to discuss common themes arising at a national cross-sectoral level. They addressed the following four topics of discussion:

- Opportunities and Impact – Collaborative Project Potential
- The Empty Space – Coastal Policy for the 2020s
- Forward Together – Common Strategic Issues
- Wide Blue Yonder – What Can Our Joint Vision be?

The key learnings from each section and their required actions (if applicable) can be found below.



Looking out into the English Channel.
Photo Credit: Alice Watts

Collaborative Project Potential

Each existing national network could align with other partnerships more effectively. Organisational strength could be usefully pooled through ensuring strong communication links between networks. This will ensure maximum effectiveness going forward, and avoid any overlap whether perceived or actual. The landscape of coastal networks has been flagged as complex to outsiders and we would benefit from eliminating possible external confusion over roles and function, as this will ease and encourage the engagement process. The next step is to provide external support to promote and achieve partnership working in areas where it may be particularly weak, i.e. with the Local Authority. We should continue to raise awareness of what it means to work in partnership and seek to increase the capacity to do so.

Funding can constrain collaboration because of competition, but collaboration can provide funding opportunities inaccessible to single party projects or organisations. MP support can sometimes be tricky for shared projects, but funding and delivery on collaborative projects offers opportunity, impact and legacy beyond individual action. It is a key regional step towards scaling up successful coastal approaches (It may also exist as a national undertaking depending on the context and the nature of the coastal issue addressed). An easier way to seek and connect with partners for collaborative projects would likely increase joint working, alongside more support regarding conducting collaborative efforts.

Collaboration between Coastal Partnerships (and between coastal networks and wider stakeholders) has progressed, but is not yet meeting its potential. Whilst there are individual efforts to address issues, these are not linked to provide maximum possible reach. Connecting initiatives both regionally and nationally could provide a stronger initiative and multiply benefits and impact. This will involve finding means of increasing communication within the CP network, whilst considering the resource challenges which may hinder participation.

Increased sharing of successes (and challenges) is needed. Whilst best practice must be sensitive to its contextual basis, there needs to be an effective way of exchanging information across the coastal community. When a difference is made through a project there should be a sharing of the successes and challenges involved so others can benefit from hindsight and experience. Celebrating successes at louder volume is important for ensuring their perpetuation and spread.

Coastal Policy for the 2020s

The need for an integrated approach that crosses the land-sea boundary. We require an integrated approach, with an equal focus upon coastal as well as marine issues. This approach is necessarily required to extend across the entire waterscape of rivers, estuaries, coast and sea so that issues are addressed in tandem, instead of in counterproductive isolation. Effective local and regional collaboration is a step towards achieving this.

Increased visibility at a national level. As well as the continuing development and strengthening through collaboration of our current networks, the establishment of an All-Party Coastal Group of MPs should be sought. This structure would do much to support the work of our coastal networks, tackle the lack of prioritisation of coastal issues and, most importantly, the lack of adequate utilisation by government of our existing structures and the local knowledge embedded within them.



Seaham. Photo Credit: CPN

Streamlining coastal governance. Coastal governance is shared through a complicated structure of organisations and groups, that both overlap and suffer from jurisdictional gaps. Government needs to engage appropriately with the Partnerships and Networks that exist in order to capitalise on local knowledge, not attempt to supersede existing community structures. From our network perspective, taking action on this point means improving

our preparedness and ability to engage with government level projects. From a regional perspective, it means avoiding unnecessary resource intensive parallelism or duplication, or on the other hand missed opportunity, through sharing and collaboration.

Common Strategic Issues

A changing of the perception of the coast is necessary. The negative perception of the majority of coastal areas as outlying, and therefore unconnected and deprived, still persists. Towns and cities on the UK coast need to continue to be recast in the minds of the population as legitimate hubs for business, as well as providing a multitude of varied and exciting holiday destinations. This is an important step towards triggering a positive cycle of more skilled in-migration, higher visitor numbers and resulting economic growth. Negative perception can be as much of a hindrance to progress as an ailing reality.

Infrastructure inadequacies need to be addressed in order to encourage economic growth. Poor and slow connection to larger inland trade and business hubs damage the viability of coastal areas as successful business environments and discourage skilled professional migration and business relocation, instead resulting in a movement of young people away from coastal towns. Investment in coastal infrastructure is needed and connectivity could be aided by once again returning to the use of river/sea routes to connect neighbouring communities with the goal of both triggering and sharing increases in prosperity and extending sense of community. Inadequate, and in places non-existent, broadband connectivity is a serious barrier to the economic growth of some coastal areas and needs to be addressed as a priority.

Multi-generational opportunity. Adequate training and development, as well as upskilling programmes should be prioritised in order to support those of working age to develop sustainable careers in the local area. These programmes can link to the rejuvenation of traditional industries in local areas - those that can innovatively support local people, tourism and the environment in tandem. The vision for development needs to be inclusive and cater for all ages and demographics. The retired population should also be valuably engaged in the local business community. Local Business Innovation Districts have potential to support cross-seasonal coastal economic growth and therefore exploration of engagement levels with BIDs is needed.



Varied industry, Teignbridge UK. Photo Credit: Graeme Smith

Ensuring sustainable tourism. Towns should support their own and utilise local workers and local produce. Shortening supply chains keeps money in the area and encourages prosperity, as well as local pride and sense of identity as a community. The USPs of areas should be promoted, coastal towns marketing themselves to adequately reflect all the coast has to offer.

Ensuring regeneration is for all. Coastal areas must keep fighting to engender sustainable economic and social regeneration that benefits the environment and retains existing community. Public space should be protected from development and utilised to bring the community together, engaging all members in a sense of shared place and belonging. The use of this space for holding coastal festivals and community events can encourage social and economic growth through attracting both tourists and locals to share in the celebration of the local coastal environment.



MALDON

An artist print postcard representing Maldon, provided by Maldon District Council. Credit: Art by Phil Clements



Photo Credit: CPN

Funding and a lack of resources. At a time when the resilience and development of our coastal communities is more important than ever, the resources to deliver the projects needed are lacking. We must continue to seek and expand the scope of collaboration, joining together to access larger funds, spread impact and set larger successful precedents to push impact up the scale.

Conservation of natural assets. A recognition of natural capital is crucial for assigning the quantifiable value sought in order to secure the future of our coastal environments. Efforts to formalise a Natural Capital agenda and framework of quantification should be actively supported and engaged with. The translation of Area Integrated Plans into Natural Capital Plans should be monitored to ensure regional/local specificity is used to increase the value and viability of these plans. Successful litter and plastic reduction campaigns that manage to begin to engender behaviour change should be celebrated and shared.

Joint Vision

Defining a shared vision that allows for local specificity. A clear shared vision will help diverse coastal regions recognise the similarities between their challenges, and that collaboration through a strong learning network can aid with addressing these priorities. It is, however, important that a shared vision merely compliments and overarches a local vision, recognising and promoting the cultural and historical qualities that are unique across and within each region.

Developing a strong policy vision for the coast. The UK's Industrial Strategy vision does not adequately address development on the coast. It touches upon flood defence, but not exclusively in a coastal context, and although a comprehensive document for other topics, the word 'coast' does not appear in the main body of the 2018 publication. Engaging coastal communities in growth should be a key step to 'boost productivity and earning power' (Industrial Strategy White Paper, 2018) and achieve the 'more evenly distributed and resilient growth' that is sought (Industrial Strategy: First Review, 2017). We would benefit from defining and seeking to formalise our vision for the coast as a step towards delivering a national Coastal Policy to guide coastal economic and social growth.

Securing the future of public ground. Although specific visions for the space will differ, seeking investment to secure and maintain public ground forms a central part of our shared vision for thriving, sustainable coastal communities. Public ground is often the last investment at county or unitary level because of the lack of "direct" return, causing a chain of aesthetic, environmental, social and economic decline. The hope is Natural Capital agendas will gather momentum and begin the process of more formally tackling this accepted devaluation. Creating dynamic places people want to live in and engage with creates a cycle of improvement, in terms of business and economic uplift, social behaviour and health and well-being.



Fishing boats. Photo Credit: CPN



Recreational sailing boats on the River Stour, Christchurch UK. Photo Credit: Alice Watts

Session 2: Familiar Territories. Chair: Bill Parker, LGA Coastal SIG



Greetings card produced by the Norfolk Coast Partnership to commemorate 50 years of the Norfolk Coast AONB. Credit: Art by Robert Gilmor

During the afternoon session delegates conducted region-focused discussion, building on the priorities that emerged from the morning's debate revolving around common national themes.

Discussion was focused upon:

- Funding
- Reaching MPs and encouraging joint working
- Creating and promoting area USPs
- Retaining locality in collaboration

Below the findings of the session are presented in relation to region.

Regional Exploration of Challenges and Opportunities

North East: Facilitated by Niall Benson, Durham Heritage Coast Partnership

Discussion in the regional session focused upon how to use political structures and interaction to change policy and access funding. This was particularly in regards to engaging "Sandside" or Coastal MPs – with the tip of using their agents initially. The group was keen on highlighting local assets and identity. There was agreement that subject or theme-based joint working rather than just geographic would help with access to funding and expertise.

North West: Facilitated by Caroline Salthouse, North West Coastal Forum

The group saw value in identifying common needs and issues on the coast and working together to create a bigger voice and achieve better access to funding. They were not convinced of the need for, or workability of, a common vision given the very diverse nature of the coast (both North West and more widely). Instead, they considered that common strategic themes could be a useful basis for more joined-up working. Initial thoughts of what these might be for North West England were: access to and along the coast, transience and lack of emotional connectivity with the coast, attractiveness to young people and residents as champions of the coast. One of the most interesting thoughts to emerge from the group was that regional working – again because the North West coast is very diverse – may not be the best approach and that instead something along the lines of a

coastal twinning programme, where areas with similar characteristics across England work together, should be established.

East: Facilitated by Fernanda Balata, New Economics Foundation – The Blue New Deal

The group discussed common agendas such as youth retention and training/upskilling projects. It became clear that using common interest as rally point instead of common geography would be a beneficial approach and that increased sharing of, or collaboration on, projects across the region could be an option for securing funding and more effective, impactful delivery. Instead of MP's pet projects, the group highlighted the need for a strong community plan which CCTs represent, in order to present a more formalised united front on appropriate and truly beneficial projects to MPs. Felixstowe, Maldon and Leiston are all part of different LEP areas, which was cited as a potential structural limitation to collaboration. All areas have strong industrial heritage - more should be made of this connection in terms of uniting culture, heritage and tourism across the region, and more widely, across regions. In terms of tourism, the importance of local access was raised, and a suggestion that we seek a return to the use of the water for transportation by opening up sea/river routes to connect neighbouring communities, instead of relying upon slow and winding country lanes that are barriers to connectivity and in-migration.

South East: Facilitated by Tony Child, Thanet Coast Project and Sam Lew, The Wash and North Norfolk Marine Partnership

Connectivity was the main issue raised in relation to breaking down barriers to collaboration across sectors and regions. Going forwards the need for effectively sharing practice and



Bournemouth Beach, UK. Photo Credit: Alice Watts

common themes, through networks such as the CPN was seen as key. It was suggested that the CCA, LG Coastal SIG and CPN could help with information to create templates for lobbying MPs. In terms of a USP for the area, proximity to Europe, ports and trade, history – as the first line of defence, and the geology of the South East were seen as important shared factors for tourism and culture. Water

and connectivity on a physical and metaphorical level were raised as a possible overriding connecting theme - water as everybody's connecting element and 'where all of the elements renew'.

South West: Facilitated by Natasha Bradshaw, UWE and Lucy Taylor, Severn Estuary Partnership Discussion revolved around post-Brexit challenges and opportunities for funding. It was felt that involvement in LEP meetings, for a chance to put forward ideas of specific coastal funding bids for the Shared Prosperity Fund, was important to promote. It was thought that the Fund may be a lever to get MPs to work together. The need for an all-party group to engage effectively and provide a voice to government was raised. In terms of a USP for the Severn Estuary/Wessex area, the group suggested a vision of 'the coast with the most' – clean, bright and wholesome, with a focus upon local business and produce. It was felt that marketing methods should capitalise more on these factors. The group saw the value in defining a shared vision, as this could promote collaboration and provide the backing of a greater number of MPs and a larger geographical spread for the leverage of funds. It was felt that underlying all action must be a focus upon livelihoods. Tuning the balance between local community needs and encouraging tourism revenue was seen as crucial to creating long-term sustainable communities.



Postcards displaying the variety of our coastline and its communities, with thanks to our CCS delegates

Concluding Remarks

The main area of learning for the day was the value of communicating coastal interests across national, regional and local levels. Identifying common ground and discussing possible solutions confirmed the transformative potential effective knowledge exchange can have for our shared, or even disparate, challenges. We speak of the shortcomings of current skills and education approaches to lift our coastal communities economically, socially and in turn environmentally. We must also look internally at how, as formal coastal stakeholders, we are stifling ourselves through a lack of effective transference and development of knowledge beyond its counterproductive silos and project files. Diversity of coastal areas is often seen as a barrier to productive wider partnership working but, overarching their specificity, many coastal areas have common or connected issues. These are the pervasive challenges that then often lead to specific area-based manifestations, and will only be tackled effectively at source with an integrated and collaborative approach. Learning exchange does not have to occur through comparison and similarities to be productive, exploring challenge and dissensus can be just as productive as consensus.



Deckchairs at Southend, UK. Photo Credit: Thames Estuary Partnership

Ideas emerged about how to define and promote USPs, develop unique 'hotspots' to encourage visitors, deliver active tourism offerings that simultaneously build local community, increase the political profile of the coast and attract further finance. Place-appropriate economic and social coastal regeneration is key to the future of coastal communities as sustainable environments, and a united voice is needed to promote these specific coastal needs. Delegate's eyes were opened to some of the great work that is occurring nationally, and the need for a repository for sharing project information on funding, operation, successes and challenges, to allow for the scaling up of effective action across our coastal areas. Many delegates left the Summit motivated to take actions to mobilise more collaborative effort. These included helping to raise the profile of, or become more involved in, the work of the national networks, seeking to engage and influence a larger number of people within their local communities and pursuing ideas for exchanging experience across the country by gathering best practice from CPs, CCTs and coastal LGAs. Several delegates indicated

the intention to seek greater contact with local councillors and MPs about wider engagement, strategies and funding opportunities. Delegates also concluded they would seek greater engagement with Local Enterprise Partnerships, in order to ensure coastal issues become placed on LEP radars. There is a key role for LEPs to play in supporting and promoting coastal USPs, in order to encourage growth across the entirety of their designated area. The value of culture as a basis for the local coastal economy and of developing stronger connections between residents, visitors and their natural environment was also cited as something to be given greater consideration going forward. Whilst many delegates reflected on problems, particularly those challenges of social/rural deprivation, there was a general tone that we should look forward positively, use the USPs of our coastal areas and be brave with our project choices.

The event worked extremely well as a platform for knowledge exchange, and delegates were able to share insights across regions and sectors. The overwhelming response was that an Annual Coastal Challenge Summit should be a calendar fixture to allow for the continued sharing of knowledge and experience, and the pinpointing of opportunities to collaborate both regionally and nationally. Although a key step towards consolidating and bringing together our coastal networks into an overall knowledge sharing and learning network, this will not be enough as a stand only event. It is important that we support the connections that have been nurtured and provide further platforms for knowledge exchange. Productive action is required to be taken from the insights that have come out of the 2018 Summit.



The Isle of Wight as seen from the beach at Steamer Point, UK. Photo Credit: Alice Watts

Key Actions

The Summit findings can be streamlined into necessitating the following actions:

- Secure funding to make the Coastal Challenge Summit an annual event to continue this process of learning from wider collaboration (CPN)
- A twinning programme of similar coastal areas - sharing opportunities and challenges (CCA/CPN)
- The creation of an All-Party Coastal Group of MPs should be sought to aid the championing of coastal issues at a national level.
- An exploration of LEP and BID engagement – the benefits, drawbacks, barriers - in order to assess advantage of increasing visibility of coastal issues via this route (CPN)
- A national project database or similar – to allow for ongoing exchange of ideas, methods and practice (CPN/CCA/LGA Coastal SIG)
- Provide further support for initiating joint working and developing mutually beneficial partnerships – via documentation, workshops.

Acknowledgements

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Sophie Badrick	National Trust, Colourful Coast Project
Fernanda Balata	New Economics Foundation
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